First of all, let me say that it is a very great honor to be asked to speak at this luncheon. As a friend and colleague of Charity Canon Willard for some years, I am especially grateful to be able to share in this celebration of her remarkable achievements. I am an art historian, as you know, and as such I am accustomed to showing slides in my oral presentations. If that were possible here, I would begin by showing you a view of Harvard Yard as it appeared in the fall of 1962. This is the place and time that we first met, in a seminar offered by the Belgian manuscript scholar, Bob Délaissé. I was starting work on my doctorate; Charity was a visiting scholar at the Radcliffe Institute for Independent Study, one of the second group to be there. Charity took me under her wing, so to speak, which did much to make Harvard a less awesome and intimidating place, as it can often seem to a new student. I found it a great comfort to discuss my work with her; I still do so, as she has always been a sympathetic listener. One of our early conversations, if I remember rightly, was about a book we had both been reading, The Waning of the Middle Ages. We both agreed that its characterization of the fifteenth century in Northern Europe as culturally decadent corresponded very little with what we had discovered about this period, but as it happens, we pronounced the author’s name rather differently. Charity used the French form “Weezinga”; I, just back from Holland, called him “Howzinga”. With our differing linguistic and literary interests, I suppose it is appropriate that we have since then met in Europe, most often in Brussels, although I can assure you that Charity and I have co-existed more peacefully than the French and Dutch languages have in Belgium! In any case, our meeting at Harvard led to a long and what has been for me a very fruitful association. My wife and I have frequently enjoyed Charity and Sumner’s hospitality and intellectual stimulation, first at West Point and later at their home in Cornwall-on-Hudson.
I have been asked to speak about Charity’s scholarly accomplishment. I can think of no better way to address this subject than to quote a passage from Christine de Pizan’s *Treasury of the City of Ladies*. Charity’s translation of this work, as you know, was published in 1989, but she will forgive me, I hope, for shortening Christine’s words somewhat for my own purposes. Christine tells us that:

> After I had built the *City of Ladies* with the aid and instruction of the three lady virtues: Reason, Rectitude, and Justice... I was worn out by that strenuous labor... and I was resting, idly, when suddenly the three radiant creatures appeared to me once more, saying: “Studious daughter! Have you spurned and silenced the instrument of your intellect? Have you let your pen and ink dry out? Have you given up the labor of your hand which usually delights you? Are you willing to listen to the seductive song which Idleness sings to you? Surely you will hear it if you are willing to listen: You have done enough; you have earned your time to rest.” But remember what Seneca says: “Although the wise one’s intellect deserves repose after great effort, still a good mind should not neglect further good work.” Do not be distracted in the middle of your long journey! Shame on the knight who leaves the battle before victory! Only those who persist deserve the laurel crown. ...Stop crouching on this dust heap of fatigue! Obey our words and your work will prosper.”

Now, I seriously doubt that these three Radiant Ladies have ever felt the need to appear to Charity, or if they did, they surely had a quite different message to bring her! As we know, in almost fifty years of journeying on the *Chemin de Long Estude*, to quote the title of another of Christine’s works, Charity has resurrected a wise lady of an earlier time, presenting in her own richly varied scholarship the richly varied life and writings of another fruitful and penetrating mind. We need only to look at Charity’s *vita* to demonstrate this. Indeed, her books and articles occupy a fair length of shelf space in my study.

They include her edition of Christine’s *Livre de la Paix*, which was Charity’s first major publication, an edition of the *Livre des trois Vertus*, the translation of the *Treasury of the City of Ladies*
from which I have already quoted, and, perhaps above all, her widely acclaimed biography of Christine that appeared in 1985. Between these book-length works, Charity has also published a great many articles on Christine's life and times, and she has also presented to us a whole series of wise ladies, including Eleanor of Portugal and Margaret of Austria. In a lighter vein is her study of “The Good Dog Souillard,” a poem by a courtier of Louis XI dedicated to a favorite hunting dog. I am not sure what the Willard cats thought about this, but Sally and I, great dog lovers, have enjoyed it very much. All in all, these publications represent an impressive achievement, but even now, Charity has not stopped to listen to the “seductive songs of Idleness.” She is currently finishing an annotated translation of Christine's *Livre des Faits d'Armes et de Chevalerie*, begun in collaboration with Sumner Willard. And she tells me that she has a number of other studies underway. I think you will agree with me that Charity has never given Christine's Three Radiant Ladies any cause for complaint.

In her introduction to *The Treasury of the City of Ladies*, Madeleine Pelner Cosman rightly characterizes Charity's translation as being informed by an “affectionate knowledge.” It has long been a fancy of mine that this affectionate knowledge is the result of a true affinity between Charity Willard and Christine de Pizan. They have, in fact, much in common. Christine did not live in a cloister, nor has Charity -- not even in an academic one, as anyone who knew Charity during her years at West Point can abundantly testify. In this connection, it is not altogether inappropriate, I think, to repeat a story that Charity has told: when she first came to West Point, she attended an orientation course for the wives of newly arrived officers; one of the lectures, so I understand, offered suggestions as to how to fill all those empty bookshelves they would encounter in the post housing. It was a lecture that was surely wasted on Charity and Sumner. They most certainly would have agreed with the novelist Anthony Powell that “books do furnish a room.”

Christine was also very much involved in education, and so is Charity. And while, to my knowledge, Charity has never had the opportunity to educate princes of the realm and other nobles, I would like to think that she has obtained greater satisfaction from
her students than Christine did from the Dauphin of France. Finally, Charity shares with Christine a lifelong commitment to defining the role of women in the world. For Christine, of course, it was the role of women in a man’s world, especially the women of the aristocratic classes. Almost six centuries after Christine, it is, I would like to think, now the question of how women and men of any class can work together to create a better world. And Charity has certainly contributed to that end, not only through her many years of devoted teaching at Ladycliff College, but also through her presence at West Point, where she not only was a model for army wives, but, as several of you mentioned to me this morning, she actively encouraged some of them to pursue their own academic careers. And of course, she played an important role in that crucial period when women first entered what had been preeminently a man’s world at West Point. Anyone who visited Charity and Sumner at West Point during those years will agree with me that they took a number of young women cadets under their wing, very much easing their integration into life at the Academy.

Not only did Charity work with her students at Ladycliff in the classroom, but she took a personal interest in them as well. I don’t know many times she took students to Paris during the winter break, where she introduced them not only to French culture but to French cuisine as well. She tells me that they often deserted the cuisine classique for le hamburger at Le Drug Store (now unhappily no longer in business). Nevertheless, I can personally attest that anyone who traveled with Charity and Sumner was doubly fortunate, and not only because of eating well: although I remember several superb lunches I had with them at the Huîtrière in Lille, and a particularly wonderful dinner at the Chapeau Rouge in Dijon — but that is another story. Travel with Charity also brings delights of a more intellectual kind: bookstores, for one, and I don’t know how many bookstores we have explored together over the years. And when I have been with her in the Bibliothèque Royale in Brussels, I am always impressed by how warmly she is welcomed by curators, and how manuscripts seem to fly off the shelves in their haste to get onto her desk. And when we take time out for sightseeing, it is a joy to see how vividly she brings back to life the past of some old castle ruin, village church, or dusty town.
square. It is the same gift, of course, that she has always demonstrated in her scholarship.

Although Charity never taught in a doctoral program, she has helped usher a number of dissertations into the world. How she did this, the particular ideas and insights she has brought to this task, many of you undoubtedly know better than I do. But I hope that Charity will not object if I say that I consider myself one of her students, too, in a sense, and thus I can speak from personal experience. If I were to name the most important lesson that I have learned from Charity, I would be inclined to say that it was tact, a kind of informed and patient listening to the past. This listening is not confined to words, of course, but includes actions as well, and is as far from an excessive reverence as it is from a desire to debunk the past, or to search it for low motives and conspiracies that never existed. This historical tact, this respectful listening, as I see it, seeks a compassionate understanding of past persons and events within the context of the perennial human situation. This may be the rarest of the scholarly virtues, perhaps, but it is one that Charity has brought into all aspects of her scholarship. Indeed, if Christine de Pizan were here with us on this occasion, I suspect that she would be very pleased to include Charity Willard among the Radiant Ladies who have served her well.